

Valentine Museum (Wickham house)
1015 E. Clay St., Richmond
Henrico Co., Virginia

VA. 310

HABS
VA.
44- Rich
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Eugene Bradbury, District Officer
210 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia

WICKHAM-VALENTINE HOUSE
(Originally residence now Museum)
Richmond, Virginia

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Owner: Valentine Museum

Date of Erection: 1812

Architect: Robert Mills

Builder: John Wickham (owner)

Present Condition: Excellent

Number of Stories: Three and basement

Materials of Construction: Brick

Other Existing Records: None known

Additional Data: This house was built in 1812 by John Wickham, who was said by his contemporaries to be the most eminent Richmond lawyer of his time. He was leader for the defense in the trial of Aaron Burr. He is spoken of in the social history of his time as a great wit, a great host, and a great lawyer.

SETTING. Handsome houses were being erected everywhere in this vicinity, which therefore became known as the "court-end" of town. Among them were the homes of Chief Justice John Marshall, Albert Gallatin, John Allan, Benjamin Watkins Leigh, Bishop Moore, Dr. John Brockenbrough, and others. Of these houses the only survivals are those of Marshall, Leigh, and Brockenbrough (now the Confederate Museum).

ARCHITECT. Wickham employed as his architect, Robert Mills, designer of Monumental Church, old City Hall, and other Richmond buildings. Mills had, before coming to Richmond, been associated with Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Latrobe, and James Hoban. Born and entirely trained in this country, Mills was truly an American architect; perhaps the first to deserve the name as it is used today. Examples of his work survive in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Charleston, and other eastern cities.

ARCHITECTURE. The style and decoration of the house are Late Georgian. It is characterized by clear wall spaces instead of panel-

ling; delicately carved ornament instead of excessive applied ornament; simplicity and dignity rather than grandeur. An architect of today has said of the house, "The plan...is perhaps its most admirable feature and follows a well established type developed in France in the 18th Century, introduced into England by Robert Adam, and later into America by Thomas Jefferson. It consists of a symmetrical pattern with a central salon in the form of an oval placed on axis at the rear, opening on a garden."

ALTERATIONS. Since it was first built, successive owners have made changes in the house. Between 1853-58, it was completely redecorated in the grand manner of the Victorians. On its chaste simplicity was overlaid a fulsome veneer in keeping with French Second Empire and English Victorian styles. Of the decoration of this period the drawing-room (now commonly called the Victorian room) bears witness. Here artificial panelling, decorated ceiling, gilt cornices and mirrors, brass gas chandelier, and an Italian marble mantel almost obliterate the cleanliness of line and spacing which originally distinguished the entire house. The room, however, does show the Victorian art of living.

Later there were other changes, the chief being the introduction into the front hall of stairs which go down to the basement. Sometime in the seventies the kitchen buildings, servants' quarters, etc., were demolished.

THE MUSEUM ERA. In 1882 the house was bought by Mann S. Valentine II, who was known as a chemist, archaeologist, patron of arts, and public-spirited citizen. In 1892 he bequeathed this house and all of his art and archaeological collections to be incorporated as a public museum for the people of Richmond. In 1898 the Museum was opened with the collections installed in this building.

After thirty years of growth, it became necessary to have larger quarters, so the Museum trustees acquired the adjoining buildings (on the site of the out-buildings originally belonging to the house) and remodelled them for the culture history collections. In 1930, everything was removed from the house that it might not have contained when it was a dwelling house of the early Nineteenth Century. (Source: Valentine Museum)

Author: Eugene Partridge

Approved: _____

ADDENDUM
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Wickham-Valentine House (Valentine Museum)
1015 East Clay Street
Richmond (Independent City)
Virginia

HABS No. VA-310

Addendum to
Valentine Museum (Wickham House)
1015 East Clay Street
Richmond
Henrico County
Virginia

HABS
VA,
44-RICH,
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127